

New Brunswick

80-year-old kicked out of hospital for holding husband's hand

Kim Crevatin begs for compassion for elderly father who has dementia and can only communicate through touch

[Vanessa Blanch](#) · CBC News · Posted: Feb 16, 2021 3:24 PM AT | Last Updated: February 17



After 60 years of marriage, Lonny and Kendyl Terris of Riverview haven't been able to see one another for more than a month. (Submitted by Kim Crevatin)

Kim Crevatin and her family have been navigating the changing COVID-19 restrictions at New Brunswick long-term care homes and hospitals since the pandemic began.

The Riverview woman understands the need to keep vulnerable populations safe but believes there should be more compassion for people like her father, who has Alzheimer's and is living in hospital as he waits for a nursing home bed.

"He can say a few words, but he can't really communicate," Crevatin said of her dad, Kendyl Terris. "The only way that we can really communicate with him is through touch, is through holding his hand, talking to him, hugging him. He still responds with hugs — he'll hug you back if you hug him."

Terris had been in a special care home, but his condition deteriorated quickly when visits were suspended early on in the pandemic, and he was transferred to the Moncton Hospital in July.



Kim Crevatin, seen here with her parents, has seen her father, who has Alzheimer's, deteriorate without regular visits during the pandemic. (Submitted by Kim Crevatin)

While the province was in the yellow phase of its pandemic recovery plan for the summer and much of the fall, Crevatin's 80-year-old mother and other family members were able to visit the hospital every day. Crevatin describes being able to see her dad as "heart-lifting" and said her parents would hold hands for hours.

"We could listen to music with him and just be really close to him," she said.

Her father was moved to the fifth floor of the hospital after Christmas and the family was surprised to find out the rules for visitors had changed, even though the region remained in the yellow phase.

"All of a sudden we couldn't hold his hand. We had to sit in the chair with an X marked on the floor that was six feet away and we were kind of like, 'Wow, you know, this is really different.'"

'Maybe there could be an exception made'

Crevatin said her mother, Lonny, was escorted out of the hospital by security after a nurse "caught" her reaching out to hold her husband's hand shortly after the move to the fifth floor.

"Most of the nurses in that unit were fantastic and very understanding, but there was a couple that were very into just ... following the rules," she said.

"They've been married for 60 years. It's very hard for my mother not to hold his hand, not to go up close to him, to touch him — especially since that's our only form of communication with him."

When the nurse asked her mother to return to her chair, two metres away, she did but Crevatin said two security guards were still called and they escorted her mother out of the hospital.

"She's crying her eyes out because this is really embarrassing for her. And she feels like she's done something wrong, that she's a criminal."

Kendyl Terris, seen here during a less restrictive recovery phase with his grandsons Cohen and Hunter Crevatin. Terris can only communicate through touch, including hugs. (Submitted by Kim Crevatin)

Crevatin said a hospital employee who screens visitors saw what was happening and handed her mother a card, suggesting she contact the patient advocate. One of the security guards apologized and told her mother: "I'm just doing my job. I don't necessarily agree with what I have to do here."

Shortly after that incident, the Moncton region was returned to the orange phase of recovery on Jan. 6, and no one has been allowed to visit Kendyl Terris since.

Crevatin has spoken with the patient advocate and with hospital management and said people keep telling her "you're not the only one going through this situation."

LISTEN / Moncton woman can't visit father with Alzheimer's:



Information Morning - Moncton 15:42

Moncton woman unable to visit her 80-year-old father with Alzheimer's despite loosened restrictions

Kim Crevatin hasn't been able to see her 80-year-old father in over 6 weeks. 15:42

While she understands that, she wants Horizon Health to consider exceptions for families who have loved ones "living in the hospital through no fault of their own" as they wait for nursing home beds.

"Maybe there could be an exception made where one person could go in at least just to see them — so that they can know that somebody's still there," she said.

"My dad is not somebody that just went in for a surgery, he's not somebody that's sick and has just gone in and can communicate with you and is coming back home."

No visitors to the Moncton Hospital have been allowed since the region entered the orange phase on Jan. 6. Spokesperson Kris McDavid says there are 'few exceptions.' (CBC)

On its website, Horizon Health states that since the Moncton area has returned to the orange phase, "strict visitor restrictions are now in place."

A spokesperson for Horizon Health did not answer specific questions from CBC about the family's case, including the day Lonny Terris was escorted out of the hospital.

"Essentially, there are no visitors allowed during the orange phase, with a few exceptions," senior communications adviser Kris McDavid said in an email.

Minister of Health Dorothy Shephard said it is a "difficult situation" for many families.

"We have all received many pleas to allow visitation, and we in no way want to bear this hardship on families, but the fact is that the risk is extremely high to open up visitation," Shephard said during a news conference on Tuesday.

"These will be conversations that will be ongoing, they will be assessed on an ongoing basis, and if changes can be made we'll be the first to jump at it, but it is about managing the risk to our most vulnerable."

Falling through the cracks

Crevatin is hopeful her father will be transferred to a nursing home soon, and her mother will be able to visit him again.

In the meantime, she worries people like her dad are falling through the cracks.

"There's an exception made for the palliative patients — which there should be — so I just think that maybe there needs to be a look at other possible exceptions as well."

Lonny Terris has been trying to stay positive during the pandemic even though regular visits with her husband haven't been possible. She spends time with her grandsons, Cohen and Hunter, who do their best to cheer her up. (Submitted by Kim Crevatin)

Crevatin said her mother "hasn't been doing great" and is struggling after weeks of no communication with her husband.

"She's been trying to stay as positive as she can," she said. "I have a seven and a 12-year-old and she loves to come over and see them and they can cheer her up so that's what she's been trying to do."

With files from Information Morning Moncton

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